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DEVELOPING A SMALL-TYPE TURKEY AT THE
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER
BELTSVILLE, MD.

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

During the last few years there has been a simultaneous increase in the number of turkeys raised and in the average size of turkeys produced. However, there has not been a corresponding increase in the demand for the heavier weight birds and this has resulted in a price differential of from 1/2 cent to 5 cents per pound in favor of smaller market turkeys. This demand on the part of consumers appears to be based on sound considerations and is likely to be permanent. For these reasons the U. S. Department of Agriculture initiated in 1934 at the National Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Maryland, an experimental project on the development of a small-type turkey. Since that time marked progress has been made but it will take several years to develop and fix definitely the desired characteristics in this small-type of turkey.

Several of the standard varieties, the wild turkey, and White Austrian turkeys imported from Scotland have been crossed in the development of this small-type turkey. From the crossbred progeny selections are being made.

The characteristics desired are as follows:

Weight at market age(24-26 weeks):

| | <u>Live weight</u> | <u>Dressed weight (undrawn)</u> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Young toms..... | 12 to 17 pounds | 11 to 15 1/2 pounds |
| Young hens..... | 7 1/2 to 10 pounds | 6 1/2 to 9 pounds |

Conformation:

Compact body with short legs, long keel bone, and an abundance of meat.

Early maturity:

In finished condition with respect to fat, fleshing, and feathering at the age of 24 weeks.

Performance:

Reasonably high egg production - 50 percent from beginning of laying to June 1. High fertility - 90 percent or greater. High hatchability - 80 percent or more of fertile eggs. High viability - 85 percent or more of all poult started.

Color: White

No hatching eggs, poult, or breeding stock are available for distribution by the Department.

